

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
BEFORE THE COLORADO SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE ON
SB26-180 INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE AUTHORITY**

**April 30, 2026
Awesta Sarkash
Vice President, State Policy & Advocacy
Small Business Majority**

Dear Chairwoman Kipp, Vice-Chairwoman Marchman, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Awesta Sarkash and I'm the Vice President, State Policy & Advocacy for Small Business Majority, a small business advocacy organization with a mission to empower America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. I'm pleased to provide written testimony regarding Senate Bill 26-180. It is not the topic of the bill we oppose, but rather the funding mechanisms used to pay for it. This legislation would undermine a key support program for small businesses and their employees in the state—namely, Colorado's Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program.

Colorado voters approved Proposition 118 in November of 2020, paving the way for a state-run FAMLI program. It allows small employers in Colorado to facilitate access to paid time off to their employees when they need to care for themselves or a family member. This is crucial for small businesses and their employees and a welcomed initiative in Colorado. According to a Small Business Majority survey, a majority of small business owners (64%) support establishing a publicly-administered family and medical leave insurance program in the state.¹ Unfortunately, SB 26-180 would leverage FAMLI dollars to pay for childcare gaps, undermining the long-term viability of the program which would harm small businesses and their workforce.

Parallel to this need to offer benefits to their employees, small businesses also struggle with accessing affordable childcare. Entrepreneurs and their employees require it to effectively offer and earn a paycheck. Small Business Majority's research found that 59% of entrepreneurs said that a lack of childcare for their own children was an impediment to growing their business.² Infant and toddler care is particularly challenging for entrepreneurs. Last year, for example, a Colorado small business owner in our network was forced to close her business when she was expecting her second child because her family couldn't afford care for one child, much less two children. Without access to childcare, she couldn't invest in her business in the way that she wanted, resulting in its eventual closure.

What's more, lack of childcare options also causes difficulties for small business employees as 30% of small businesses have had an employee quit due to their childcare issues.³ These struggles underscore the importance of supporting small childcare businesses so they can provide an essential service to their communities and offer essential infrastructure to other small businesses and their employees. However, the premise of pulling from one program's funding that supports our workforce to fund another program is not the appropriate approach. Small business owners and employees with children rely on both programs: FAMLI allows them to take time away from work to welcome a new child and childcare

¹ "Colorado small businesses support paid family medical leave." Small Business Majority. March 28, 2019. <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/colorado-small-businesses-support-paid-family-medical-leave>

² "Opinion Poll: Small businesses support policy solutions to address our nation's childcare challenges." Small Business Majority. April 9, 2024. <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/opinion-poll-small-businesses-support-policy-solutions-address-our-nation-s-childcare-challenges>

³ Ibid.

assistance helps them access childcare once they return to work. The state should prioritize addressing childcare funding gaps, but not at the expense of the FAMILI program.

We urge Colorado policymakers to seek alternative funding mechanisms to continue to support small businesses and their employees who desperately need access to affordable childcare services to flourish and grow in their endeavors.

Sincerely,

Awesta Sarkash
Vice President, State Policy & Advocacy
Small Business Majority